175 leaders then imprisoned in Siberia and in various Russian jails. The most prominent
642 175 of them was the lawyer, P. E. Svinhufvud, who upon his return was made the head of the senate, the temporary government of Finland--there being no Czar or Grand Duke any more. This government took a decisive step on 6 December 1917 proclaiming Finland an independent state free from Russia and appealing to the statement made by Lenin that no nation was to be
[648] held by Russia without its own consent. The independence of Finland was first acknowledged by France, then by Sweden, Russia and other European countries, and finally by Great Britain and the United States in May, 1919.

175 But it was apparent that Lenin was not going
● 669 to be true to his promise. Russian troops

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remained in Finland, causing much disturbance and infiltrating the Finnish Red Guards. At the end of January, 1918, divil war broke out. The Reds took over Helsinki and southern Finland and installed a communist government. When the senate fled to northern Finland, the country was divided into "white" and "red." In the districts which they controlled, the Communists murdered many prominent citizens who were supposed to be "white"--farmers, state officials, ministers, businessmen--burned buildings and robbed stores. The "white" government gave the task of returning order to General Gustaf Mannerheim, recently returned from Russia where he had made a brilliant military career in the Russo-Japanese War as well as in World War I.

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• 669 Mannerheim was quite unknown in his own country, which he had left as a young boy, but he had a deep understanding of his people and immediately earned their full confidence and admiration. He took a decisive step on the night of January 27 at which time some Ostrobothnian farmers, with the help of hunting rifles, knives and clubs, attacked several Russian garrisons and seized their weapons. This was the first equipment of the Finnish army. Mannerheim accomplished wonders with his untrained troops; young Finns in German service returned and were installed as officers; Mannerheim , administered a decisive blow to the Reds in the most important battle of the Finnish War of Independence at Tampere in April, 1918. After that, German

175 669 troops landed in southern Finland, but there was only scattered resistance now, and on May 16, 1918, Mannerheim rode into Helsinki amidst music and flowers at the head of his army, a striking figure on his white steed, admired and glorified like a god by one-half of the nation and bitterly hated by the other.

642 175 Beginning its existence as an independent state did not create any administrative difficulties, since Finland had long possessed the basic institutions and trained officials. But the nation was still divided. Aware of the danger inherent in the internal dissension now plaguing the new government, Mannerheim urged mutual forgiveness and understanding, and advocated unity between the Scandinavian countries to which Finland belonged by its very nature, customs, ideology and history.